

VETERANS & FEDERAL HIRING

Many military veterans receive a strong preference within the Federal Government's standard hiring process. Dating back to the Civil War, this preference was originally intended to offset economic loss experienced by veterans, ease transition from military service to civilian life, and to honor the Nation's obligation and debt to veterans. Unfortunately, the current application of this preference in competitive examining does little to help early career veterans and undermines the competitive process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commission proposes to modernize preferences and special hiring options for veterans to refocus the benefits of these policies on early career, recently discharged veterans who are transitioning to civilian Federal employment and to ensure that Federal agencies can hire highly qualified workers, including highly qualified veterans. The Commission's recommendations would:

- **Make veterans' preference a tiebreaker between equally qualified applicants.**
Preference-eligible veterans would receive preference over other equally rated applicants but would no longer be automatically upgraded to the best qualified category.
- **Focus veterans' preference on recently discharged veterans.**
Preference-eligible veterans would have 10 years from discharge to use the preference, giving them a better chance when competing against later-career veterans. Additionally, current Federal employees with more than two years of Federal service would not be preference eligible. This option provides flexibility to transitioning veterans by allowing them to use the preference again if they initially enter a Federal position that is not the right fit.
- **Expand eligibility for the Veterans Recruitment Appointment (VRA).**
Under current law, Federal agencies may hire any qualified veteran who was discharged in the previous 3 years without completing a competitive process. The Commission proposes to extend this authority to 10 years after discharge. In addition, the Commission proposes expanding training for transitioning veterans so they know about this eligibility and how to use it and updating USAJOBS to more efficiently connect eligible veterans with the Federal agencies that want to hire them.

For more information about the Commission's recommendations on veterans' preference and VRA, please see Pages 71–73 of [*Inspired to Serve: The Final Report of the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service*](#).



VETERANS' PREFERENCE IN COMPETITIVE EXAMINING

The Commission frequently heard that “veterans’ preference is just a tiebreaker,” but this is incorrect. As shown in the graphic below, when Federal agencies assess the qualifications of job applicants, many preference-eligible veterans who are assessed as *minimally qualified* are automatically upgraded to the *best qualified* category. These minimally qualified applicants receive preference over better qualified candidates, and at times even over *well qualified* veterans.

Category Rating and Veterans’ Preference in the Competitive Examining Process



VP 10%
Preference-eligible veteran, disability rating of 10% or higher



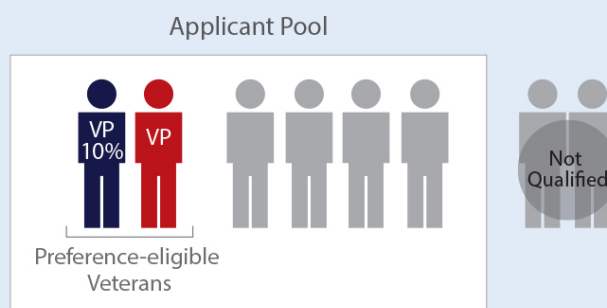
VP
Preference-eligible veteran, no service-connected disability



Individual not preference-eligible

1. Qualification

Applicants who do not meet the minimum qualifications for the position description are removed from the applicant pool.



2. Assessment

Applicants who meet minimum qualifications are assessed into three quality categories.



3. Category Upgrade

Veterans with a service-connected disability rating of 10 percent or higher who were originally assessed as "Minimally Qualified" or "Well Qualified" are moved up to the "Best Qualified" category. This process is sometimes called "floating."



4. Selection

HR presents the hiring manager with a certification list of applicants from the “Best Qualified” category. The hiring manager must:



Select a preference-eligible veteran

-or-



Conduct the pass-over process for each preference-eligible veteran, documenting proper and adequate reasons why the veteran is unqualified or unsuitable before reaching nonpreference-eligible candidates

-or-

Return the certification list without making a hire